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Gloria Majorum, Posteris Lumen.

WASHINGTON AND HIS ARMY

DURING THEIR MARCH THROUGH AND RETURN TO

NEW JERSEY,

IN DECEMBER 1776, AND JANUARY, 1777.

READ BEFORE THE LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY,

BY C. C. HAVEN,

ONE OF ITS VICE PRESIDENTS.

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ADDRESS

TO THE

LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

Gentlemen :—The subject for our consideration is Washington and his Army, their trials and triumphs, and the political condition of affairs in this vicinity, during their march through and return to New Jersey, in the memorable winter of 1776 and 1777, until they went into winter quarters at Morristown.

No period during the struggle for our independence was more eventful than this, none more interesting, none more important in its relations and consequences, to this State in particular, and to the country at large.

It will be my endeavor to present to your notice a few of the many prominent characters connected with the historic renown of those days, and to portray in fresh colors some of the achievements and sufferings of our more humble Revolutionary Patriots engaged in this portion of their glorious career, because, in the first place, I love and venerate their memories, and because, moreover, I do not think that history has yet done ample justice to their fame. On the battle fields where they fought and many of them fell, there are but few monuments as yet erected to tell of their sufferings and exploits, and it is time, in this State at least, that some of the distinguished sons of these patriotic sires should add to their re-

nown, like Cicero at the tomb of Archimedes, by clearing away the brush and moss of oblivious time, which are fast gathering over their graves, and erecting suitable memorials of their ever enduring benefits to our country, and the cause of freedom everywhere.

Although not to the manor born, I address myself to those who are especially interested in this locality. We have all, in conjunction therewith, privileges to enjoy and duties to perform. The ground on which we tread is eloquent with the memories of mighty deeds. Every thing relating to the heroes of the Delaware and the Assunpink, every interesting fact, even every ordinary incident, in connexion with their perils and toils in this vicinity, should be garnered up and preserved by us for posterity. Such treasures have an ever increasing value in proportion as time increases their antiquity.

Let any one who doubts this now visit the ancient plains of Marathon, or the modern fields of Austerlitz, Borodino, or Waterloo, and see how searching a curiosity he will have, to learn the minutest particulars of the great events for which those places are so renowned. Of famed Thermopylae, who does not yet delight to hear? Leonidas and his devoted band have ever living monuments in our hearts and memories. They died for Greece. Through them, and such as them, Greece still lives. And shall not Washington and his brave comrades be forever honored for their bold deeds and painful trials, within sight of this spot, when, in circumstances more fortunate in their results, but scarcely less desperate than those of the self sacrificing Spartans, they braved the eddying whirls and crushing ice fields of

the Delaware, amidst the darkness and sleet of a winter's night, and falling upon the affrighted hirelings of our pampered foes, once more shouted the almost forgotten cry of victory?

Shall not that noble army of devoted heroes who stood by the fortunes of their country on the banks of the Assunpink, when they were absolutely its forlorn hope, half starved with hunger and cold, in that darkest and most critical period of the war, be entitled to grateful remembrance, whilst valor, freedom and fortitude are held in estimation? Certainly for such men as these, who secured a prize for their country and themselves, in comparison with which, the gems and crowns of monarchs would be as common dust, there must be imperishable fame.

In looking back to those most perilous and forlorn periods of our Revolutionary history, when the tide of independence seemed fast ebbing into a deeper abyss than that from which it had just emerged, and the glow of American freedom came near being extinguished as adversity began "to pale its ineffectual fires," we cannot help experiencing an anxious curiosity to trace out who were the master spirits, who, almost miraculously, rescued the cause from absolute perdition.

I will not allude to the earlier period of the Revolution. We know there were a few, but only a few, who saw, or believed they saw, the end of it from the beginning. I do not speak of them particularly; those old prophetic seers, who first saw Heaven-born freedom, the archetype of our model Republic, descending on our shores—whose eagle ken pierced through the clouds which hid from common

sight the glorious vision that we now behold. They saw by faith!

But I perfer to speak of those workers in the great cause for establishing our independence—the apostles of liberty—more especially the members of the first Congress of the States who had pledged their lives and fortunes, and sacred honor to accomplish the work of emancipating us from foreign tyranny and establishing a union of free, sovereign, and independent States which is now "Heaven's last best gift to man." And with these wise, faithful, and matchless statesmen, our brave forefathers in the field must have an equally honorable place. Foremost of all, Washington, their chosen leader

"Whose name strikes every title dead," *

—and that gallant host of officers and men who were ever ready to pour their blood out like water in their country's cause—these were the men, these the master spirits to whom we really are indebted for our Nation's existence. These all, patriots, statesmen and war worn soldiers, although driven from place to place by adverse circumstances, contrived to keep Congress in session and to preserve that sacred palladium of freedom, which held together

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*On the question being asked by the selectmen of Portsmouth, N. H., when *General* WASHINGTON visited that town after he was made *President*, "what *title* should be given him?" my father, Rev. Samuel Haven, D. D., (who, although a clergyman, thought it no robbery nor sacrilege to make saltpetre out of the unsunned earth taken from beneath his own church and other old buildings with which powder was to be made to help to secure our independence) replied as follows:

Fame spread her wings and loud her trumpet blew,
Great WASHINGTON is near!—What praise HIS due!
"*What title shall he have?*" She paused and said—
Not one! HIS NAME strikes every title *dead!*

the hopes of the people and prevented them from ever abandoning eventual success. Yes! These were the true, the faithful few, the never to be forgotten master builders of our national edifice, who founded and secured it "proof against the tempest's shock." No timorous, time serving politicians, holding up the country's hour glass, shewing how near its sands were being exhausted, and looking wistfully for pardon and protection for themselves, ever, for a moment, seduced these noble spirits to swerve from duty and fidelity! No! in their darkest extremity

> "Even then dishonor's peace they spurn'd,
> The sullied olive-branch returned,
> Stood for their country's glory fast
> And nail'd their colors to the mast."

Before entering into the detailed accounts of what followed the declaration of independence, allow me to give an incidental glance at the condition of popular rights and sentiments at the time that the colonial difficulties with the mother country first broke out.

With a very few exceptions all the king's subjects in America were loyalits, but, for the most part considered themselves aggrieved and sought a redress for their grievances, humbly and respectfully.

Persecution for a difference of opinion as regarded the means of accomplishing their object, had not then been commenced. Independence, separation from the parent country, was a *night*-dream only, engendered by the disturbed imagination of a few indomitable men, wrestling in sleep with their unnatural oppressors.

It did not become a *waking* reality, until the ruth-

less and overbearing tyranny of the parent at home, as England was then called, had "murdered sleep" and the blood of our American martyrs cried from the ground for revenge. Even long after the convention of States met in council, long after Lexington and Bunker Hill had given an earnest of that determined spirit, which, like the cradled Hercules, would soon dare to cross the lion in its path, there seemed to be no general intention of sundering the knot which bound them to the king and constitution of old England, galling as that knot had become.

As late as July, 1775, a petition was presented to his most gracious majesty from Congress, representing the States and people, which was drawn up with great ability by that eminent statesman, John Dickinson, of Delaware. In this document, containing a manly remonstrance against the wicked acts of Parliament and the evil counsels of ministers, there were the following humble professions and many others like them, which were openly avowed and sent to king George as a peace offering.

"Attached to your Majesty's person, family and government, with all the devotion that principle and affection can inspire, connected with Great Britain by the strongest ties that can unite society, and deploring any event that tends in any degree to weaken them, we solemnly assure your Majesty that we not only desire the former harmony between her and these colonies may be restored, but that a concord may be established between them, upon so firm a basis, as to perpetuate its blessings uninterrupted by any future dissensions," &c.

This petition, to be sure, was sent forth after the

colonies had an army in the field, and only three days after the date of that other celebrated manifesto, written by the same man and issued by the same Congress, intended as a pioneer test of public sentiment, and which Washington was directed to have read to the army at Cambridge.

In this important state paper occur expressions, which were more like a prefiguration of that independence which, in one year after, severed from its old formation and unnatural affinities, sprang, like a new chrystalization, in conformity with God's law, into a separate existence, which has eventually made us a world by ourselves. With your permission I will quote a few of these stirring sentences which are of interest in our own times:

"If it was possible for men, who exercise their reason, to believe that the divine Author of our existence intended a part of the human race to hold an absolute property in, and an unbounded power over others, marked out by His infinite goodness and wisdom as the objects of a legal domination, never rightfully resisted, however severe and oppressive, the inhabitants of these colonies might at least require from the Parliament of Great Britain some evidence that this dreadful authority over them has been granted to that body. But a reverence for our great Creator, principles of humanity, and the dictates of common sense, must convince all those who reflect on the subject, that government was intended to promote the welfare of mankind and ought to be administered for the attainment of that end. The legislature of Great Britain however, stimulated by an inordinate passion for a power not only unjusti-

fiable, but which they know to be reprobated by the very constitution of that kingdom, and desperate of success in any mode of contest, where regard should be had to truth, law, or right, have, at length, deserting those, attempted to effect their cruel and impolitic purpose of enslaving these colonies by violence, and have thereby rendered it necessary for us to close with their last appeal from reason to arms. ***

"We are reduced to the alternative of choosing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers, or resistance by force. The latter is our choice. *We have counted the cost of the contest and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery.* Honor, justice and humanity forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them, if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them. ***

"With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world *declare*, that exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties, *being with one mind resolved to die* FREEMEN, *rather than to live* SLAVES."

In alluding to these distinguished specimens of American principles, it is not my main object to give

a vivid illustration of the unsettled state of affairs with Great Britain in July, 1775, but to present the basis of public opinion from which grew up those discordant parties in this country, whigs and tories, whose war with each other was, soon afterwards, as fierce and unabating as family strife and domestic hatred could make them. I wish to state fairly the causes of a difference of opinion and the perfect right each individual had, *originally*, to be tolerated in his views and protected in his person and property, so long as he was just, neutral and tolerant to others.

That this right was not acknowledged by the whigs, nor enjoyed by their countrymen who differed with them about the expediency of making an immediate declaration of independence, is a matter of history. And why was it not acknowledged? The tories, as they were called, were, many of them, as true patriots and as hostile to tyranny in sentiment as the most determined lovers of independence, and the governing prerogative was in that inchoate state that *power only* seemed to have some right to assume sovereignty, and the minority had to submit, even if they had done no wrong. Worse than this, they could not remain neutrals! Now these, at the present day, would certainly be considered hard conditions! Could *we* ever have been, can *we ever be* tempted to impose such cruel, unjust restrictions upon our brethren, as to do the very thing to them which we would not desire, nor permit to have done to us?

But let it ever be borne in mind that ours was a two-fold Revolution, involving at first and generally our colonial ancestors in hostility towards the mother country, and afterwards compelling the majority to

put down any hostile acts, and even declarations, which their brethren in the minority might think themselves privileged to hold on to, either as parties to the old government or the new. But one declaration of that new government was, as addressed to the king of Great Britain and *all his subjects*, as follows:

"We must, therefore acquiesce in the necessity "which denounces our separation, and hold them, as "we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in "peace, friends."

The will of the majority had to assume the sovereignty, and it is only astonishing, in those soul trying and heart rending times, that wisdom, talent and virtue enough should have been developed to found a free, independent, and untried form of government. In that crisis the blow was struck, which caused our glorious Republic, Pallas like, to spring all armed, into being. The oppressed colonists *generally* united in asserting that they ought not to submit. "You shall," said the British king and his inexorable ministers. "We will not, so help us, God" replied the heroic pioneer band, who first breathed the breath of life into this nation—"never! never! never!" and that irrevocable resolve, echoed from the bosoms of our brave ancestors, who from thence forth determined never to be enslaved, gave us the title deed eventually, which after being recorded in blood, secured for us and our children and children's children forever, this "land of the free, and home of the brave."

But this eventful declaration, which was hailed as a day spring by thousands of the then young Americans, was a sad and fatal blow to the rights and liberties of many, who were thereby rendered exiles in

their own native land, made to appear disloyal to a government they wished not to abandon, and liable to be persecuted for that very freedom of opinion which their brethren were then contending for against Great Britain.

It is an agonizing picture to behold the miseries brought on by this state of things, during the continuance of the war in this and other States—families tortured into hostility with each other—fathers warring with their sons—brothers with brothers—bosom friends sundered, alienated, and compelled perhaps to destroy each other in obedience to a *political necessity*! Whose heart does not now yearn in sympathy, when calling to mind the sufferings, privations, and tortures of the men, women and children of those distressing days?

Colonel Joseph Read, one of the early patriots of the Revolution, thus depicts the situation of things in Philadelphia in 1776: "It was not the disturbance of ordinary politics but a fierce contest as to popular rights, asserted resolutely and hotly denied. Revolutionary committees taking possession of political power by no gradual or gentle process, but forcibly and roughly—soldiers enlisting, fortifications building—rumors of distant war and the sound of hostile cannon close at their doors."

No wonder that this gallant and accomplished soldier and civilian found himself perplexed in the extreme. He had married in England and retained many friends there—but when he gave his hand to Washington and his heart to this country, well might he say, he was not to be bought by British gold and ought to have scorned intimacy with an ambitious,

dissembling and invidious British General, striving to supersede his friend.

No wonder that conscientious and independent men, like the brothers Dickinson, should have differed in their opinions and line of conduct in those trying times—John, the patriot, orator and statesman, from whose glowing appeals in behalf of his country's cause I have already quoted, was opposed to the declaration of independence *at the time it was adopted*, although he afterwards approved of it and served as a whig representative in the Congress of 1780—whilst Philemon, on the contrary, the patriot General, skilled in strategy, and intimate in the counsels and confidence of Washington, took his place early in the camp, and exerted himself promptly, gallantly, and faithfully, shunning no responsibilities or hardships, but continuing, throughout the war, to be a most efficient officer, and after it a truly valuable citizen.

No wonder that the illustrious Franklin, even whilst gloriously struggling in foreign Courts to obtain our country's freedom, should have had the mortification to be denounced as a rebel by his own natural or unnatural son. He it was, the pensioned loyalist, who, whilst acting Governor of this State, was commissioned to offer a pardon to his father, as well as others, if they would return to British allegiance. But he who had brought down the lightning from the skies, disdained the blind policy of the "mousing owl"—

"Eripiut coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis."

Such are some of the anomalous embarassments and distressing circumstances which attended the

early stages of our Revolutionary struggle, exhibiting a sort of mixed, or triangular contest, called the war of Independence, lasting seven years. Its successful termination was undoubtedly due to those brave men who commenced and carried it triumphantly through, at the hazard of their lives and everything they held dear. Their prestige and success will forever immortalize their memories. I shall soon advert more particularly to some of their noblest achievements ; but in justice to the characters of many modest and meritorious patriots, who, although hesitating at the first, became firm adherents to the patriotic cause, sooner or later, and contributed liberally to its support, let me here speak with respectful admiration. Many had a share in our national parentage, whose names are yet unwritten in history. Many philanthrophic friends, besides Hancock and Morris, and that noble list of Philadelphia gentlemen who subscribed so liberally to furnish the sinews of war—many of the peace-loving Quakers, who loaned their hard money in Washington's extremest exigency, and helped the suffering soldiers. Yes! those noble, unpretending Quakers! many of their hearts mused quietly in hope, whilst the fires of freedom were kindling ; and, although they were constrained, by prudential reasons, from taking an open part in the war, were constantly doing us good by stealth, for which they would have blushed to have received any fame. It would be invidious to deny such friends of both sexes our meed of gratitude. With the well earned laurels they shunned to wear whilst living, let it be our privilege to adorn their memories, and to transmit their example to posterity.

Of that large class of disaffected colonists who, from the first, took sides with the British government and who maintained an active hostility against their brethren here throughout the war, and finally became pensioners abroad, or eventually were admitted as members of that free government, whose independence they did all in their power to prevent, I wish not to speak further. All that I could suggest in exculpation of their conduct would not stifle the reproaches of the well-authenticated history of the times. Of a choice of evils, they chose probably what their consciences dictated to be right in principle, but by their works they must be known.

In concluding this part of my subject, in which I fear I have too long tasked your patience, allow me to say briefly, it is high time in my opinion to ignore all reproachful epithets and reminiscences connected with the names of *whig and tory*, and to disdain to wear the foreign livery of subjects who attach to those names a very different signification from what is meant by them here. We are, or ought to be, Americans, and nothing but Americans, upholding a free government and freedom of opinion; and, so doing, we ought to cast the mantle of charity over the characters of our ancestors, whether whigs or tories, who conscientiously espoused what they thought to be right, and to bury all animosity for what, in so thinking, they did wrong. Let their memories and the standing of their descendants have the full benefit of an amnesty never to be disturbed. Such devoted loyalty to principle in spite of persecutions at home and abroad, as was the lot of many of the *tories*, and such patriotism as indignantly resisted

tyranny and injustice, and enabled our whig ancestors to reject a foreign sceptre and to conquer an independent name and assume a standing of no secondary character among the nations of the earth, is lineal glory enough for any American to be contented with and needs no heraldry to emblazon it.

Let us now approach the consideration of that most interesting epoch which it was my design to place before you—that memorable month in which Washington, with his defeated and deserting army, was seen retreating across the Jerseys and taking shelter on the western side of the Delaware, and, soon afterwards, turning from thence, like a chafed lion upon his pursuers, and driving back their scattered forces into narrow and well watched quarters.

After the British were driven from Boston, and a portion of their fleet under Admiral Parker, had received at Charleston what Washington familiarly called "a severe drubbing," by the gallant Moultrie, (then acting under General Lee, but contrary to his counsel,) our army was withdrawn from New England, and stationed principally on Long Island and in New York, to resist an expected attack in that quarter.

Overpowered by numbers, with the aid of a powerful fleet, they soon had to retire and abandon all their positions in that quarter, except Fort Washington. The main body of the troops were marched to White Plains. General Lee, who had just returned from the South, and was at that time very popular in the country, was left in charge of the camp there, and Washington with a part of the troops moved up the Hudson and crossed over to Hacken-

sack. It was, at this memorable crisis, when that "excessively exciting" interview, as Irving calls it, took place between him and Generals Putnum and Greene, in open boats at night-fall on the North river. It was here, for the first time, that the Commander-in-Chief, who was opposed to the other two generals in regard to the defence of Fort Washington, gave up his usually prudential firmness and yielded to their inconsiderate zeal to defend that place, the surrender of which cut off one-third of Washington's army, which was necessary to defend himself against an enemy flushed with conquest and threatening to surround him.

This loss caused him great grief, and it is asserted that when he was looking through his telescope at Fort Washington, whilst visiting Fort Lee, and seeing that the former was about to be taken, and his brave troops, after fighting gallantly and striking their flag, were denied quarter and inhumanly butchered by the remorseless Hessians, tears flowed profusely from his eyes, which were unused to weep. After this catastrophe at Fort Washington he hastened back to the remnant of his forces left at Hackensack, and ordered General Greene to abandon Fort Lee, which he did, but narrowly escaped being cut off by the British, who captured nearly all the stores and ammunition which had been accumulated, besides the guns of that valuable fort.

It was then for the first time that the peaceful citizens of New Jersey found their homes invaded by hostile bands of foreign marauders—fierce, rapacious and licentious troops quartered in their houses, and the cost of that independence which they had at

first espoused in connexion with their brethren of other States had to be calculated and their share of it borne, or they would prove themselves recreant to their voluntary professions and obligations. There was but little time to deliberate. The enemy was at their doors offering them an ignominious pardon. Did they hesitate which to choose? Liberty, and perhaps death, or pardon and ignominy.

Alas! who can look back and realize the agony which such a soul-trying crisis produced?—the wrestling of devoted family affections, in conflict with principle in the breasts of those who never had a doubt of their fidelity to one another and to honor and freedom before!—the crafty subtleties of the tempter without, and the cowardly, temporizing, selfish, calculations within!—the cry of Washington and his brave comrades for instant help, to save their own State and their country's freedom from the clutch of the ravenous foe! These are some of the actual exigencies which Jerseymen in 1776, Jersey fathers, Jersey mothers, Jersey sons, were called to deal with!

And how did they deal with them! Did the friends of liberty all deny her and desert her fleeing standard? Not all! but oh! how few among the faithful then were found!

Well might the almost deserted but impassioned Washington have exclaimed—

"O! for a blast of that dread horn
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
Which to King Charles did come!
When Rowland brave and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer
At Roncevalles died."

But he, thank God, dark as the storms were that gathered around him, and frightful as the prospect must have been, if he had to rely on such help to defend the State, he stood undismayed!

In that portentous exigency, when every ray of hope appeared to have abandoned the wavering and frightened masses of the people, and a gloom like that of a sudden and unexpected night had settled on all below and around him, his eagle eye was still soaring higher and higher, to keep its steady gaze upon the departing day, and thus from his habitual trust in God and the light of conscious rectitude in his cause, it seemed as if

"Eternal sunshine settled on his head."

Dr. Ramsay, in his history, describing the desperate situation of the country at that time, does it so vividly, that I beg leave to transcribe a few extracts for your attention:

"The retreat into and through New Jersey was attended with almost every circumstance that could occasion embarrassment and depression of spirits. ***

"The Americans had lost 2700 men in Fort Washington. In fourteen days after that event, the whole flying camp claimed their discharge. This was followed by the almost daily departure of others, whose engagements terminated about the same time. ***

"Two Jersey regiments (from Ticonderoga,) were put under the command of General St. Clare. *** The period for which they were enlisted was expired, and the moment they entered their own State, they went off to a man. A few officers, without a single private, of these two regiments, were all that Gen-

eral St. Clare brought to the aid of the retreating army. The few who remained with General Washington, were in a most forlorn condition—without tents or blankets, and without utensils to cook their provisions. In this situation they performed a march of about ninety miles, and had the address to prolong it nineteen days. *** As the retreating Americans marched through the country, (this State,) scarcely one of the inhabitants joined them, while numbers were daily flocking to the royal army to make their peace and obtain protection. They saw on the one side a numerous, well-appointed, and full clad army, dazzling their eyes with the elegance of uniformity; on the other, a few poor fellows, who, from their shabby clothing, were called *ragamuffins*, fleeing for their safety. Not only the common people changed sides, but some of the leading men in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, surrendered themselves to the conquerors, alleging that they had never approved of the measures lately adopted, and in particular were at all times averse to independence."

Besides these disheartening circumstances, the Commander-in-Chief had his own private griefs to contend with—dissatisfaction, disobedience and desertion of some of those highest in favor in the army and who became so in the country generally, because they had been successful, and he was not—they had reaped laurels which others had won for them—and he had lost them because his chance of obtaining them was frustrated by insuperable difficulties, and because, like Fabius, he preferred securing victory by fortitude, prudence and delay, rather than rashly risking everything to exhibit what they called deci-

sion! General Lee refused moving to his assistance, after reiterated orders and remonstrances; but, as if to clip his self-importance, he was soon afterwards taken a prisoner by his own folly and imprudence. Gates preferred deserting him at his utmost need and going on to Congress to suggest his own plan for saving the country—and, worse than all, his own "bosom's oracle," his Marcus Brutus, in the camp and in council, the friend who absolutely had the love of such a heart as Washington's, (I name him not), at that moment faltered in his confidence in him, and if he had not promptly repented of his folly and injustice, he would thereby have fixed an eternal stigma on his own hitherto unsullied character. Washington was only exalted the more by all these pitiable misgivings. What he knew of them he overlooked and forgave; but he did not know all; and, as it has not comported with the dignity of history, to make useless allegations of faults which can now neither be parried nor defended, it certainly would be reprehensible in me to further allude to them.

The actors in these scenes are long since quiet in their graves. Let a requiem be said over their errors as well as their distinguished virtues. Americans of this age surely cannot deny them any honor justly due for their eminent services to the country, even if not always found infallible in their opinions and actions.

In spite of all difficulties Washington finally succeeded in getting his skeleton army across New Jersey, although in a most forlorn state, and after passing over the Delaware, hauled up the boats on the

Pennsylvania side, without being overtaken by his pursuers, although they were close upon his track. Cornwallis, fortunately, had no means of crossing the river until the ice should be formed, and, as this was daily expected, he resolved to wait for it and give himself little anxiety about the future. In fact, he was so flushed with success at his recent victories over the rebels, that, obtaining leave from Lord Howe he returned to New York with the intention to go to England to assure his Majesty that the Revolution was quelled, and order and loyalty were about to be restored in the provinces. Before leaving, however, he had posted the German regiments all along the Jersey side of the Delaware, under Rahl, Dunop, and other Hessian officers, with orders to keep an eye on Washington's movements and to grant pardons and protections to all the inhabitants of Jersey ; that is to say, to all who would abandon the cause of freedom and swear allegiance to the British crown.

In this way, these hireling Hessians very soon felt as if they were the lords of the New Jersey manor, and posted up and down the left banks of the Delaware, committing all sorts of rapine, insult and oppression upon the peaceful and loyal inhabitants, without regarding their pledges of protection, and finally made themselves odious as well as terrible. They only seemed waiting for the river to be bridged over by the ice to enable them to take possession of Philadelphia, and thus give the *coup-de-grace* to their achievements.

Congress at the same time appeared to be alarmed for their safety, and resolved to adjourn to Baltimore.

Even the cradle of Independence in Philadelphia seemed almost within the grasp of the enemy, and the example and the watchfulness of the brave old Putnam could hardly preserve order in that city of brotherly love, nor restore the lost confidence in the success of our arms anywhere. Everything seemed to go wrong. On the very day the remnant of the army got across the Delaware into Pennsylvania, one of the States, Rhode Island, was taken possession of by the British, and the only squadron Congress then had fitted for sea was thus shut up by them in Providence.

Fortunately for the country, Washington possessed a spirit that seemed not only invulnerable to disaster, but so tenacious of success eventually, that victory and independence were always cherished guests in his bosom, never to be abandoned. Congress, therefore, transferred their waning confidence in the cause to his care, and invested him then with almost dictatorial powers. How safe this trust was in his keeping, history has told!

He began immediately to make use of it. His retreat thus far, which military men give him now great credit for, was looked upon, *at the time*, as most disastrous; but even before it was accomplished, his thoughtful mind was then meditating a reaction upon the foe, or, as a last resort, a further retirement into the fastnesses of the wilderness, where, behind the Alleghanies, he would wait for Congress to recruit a sufficient army for him eventually, to quit his mountain home, and to drive the enemy into the sea.

But his first scheme was now to be tried—to fall upon the harpies that were pursuing him, and to clip

their wings whilst distended. The time was come to attempt something on their unguarded outposts, to shew that he was not wanting in decision, and to convince the country that it was necessary to turn upon their invaders, to punish and drive out the brutal Hessians, whose lustful and rapacious soldiery spared neither age nor sex, whigs nor tories. A vigorous resistance, he thought, would rouse the drooping spirits of the people in this and other States, and induce some of them to abandon the royal standard, and return to help their own countrymen whom they had so cravenly deserted.

It was now the time for New Jersey to turn upon her treacherous oppressors, and she did so effectually. Her terrified and deluded citizens had found the easy yoke and buoyant promises vouchsafed to her by her loyal masters, heavier than all the burdens of light-hearted Liberty, and they turned back, therefore, with indignant energy to scourge her betrayers out of the State. Animated as she was by the clarion call of her determined spirit-stirring Governor, Livingston, whose words of fire warned her citizens to put their trust in the Lord of hosts, and to do their own share of the work which His manifest will was pointing out for them to do, and not again "to trust in lies" new recruits, and volunteer aid of all sorts began to come forward to inspire the confidence of the Commander-in-Chief and to change his opinion of New Jersey patriotism, of which afterwards he made such honorable mention in his reports to Congress.

Pennsylvania too, not willing to see the flag of Independence trailing in the blood and mire,

mingled in the footsteps of its few devoted defenders, soon raised an auxiliary corps of 1,500 new troops, many of them from the first ranks of society and commanded by the gallant Cadwalader. General Mifflin and Philemon Dickinson were also zealously and actively engaged in recruiting new levies and encouraging the old to remain in service, and about this time Washington had received the fatigued and worn-out fragments of Gates' and Sullivan's divisions of the Northern army—but in such a condition, that they could hardly be relied on for actual service. I say, and I beg you to realize what is stated indisputably by others, that the condition of these brave, suffering soldiers, at that time, was so heart-rending, it would not be tolerated for a moment in our days, and scarcely can be believed by us. In our comfortable homes, well clothed, and warmed, and fed, many of us, by our own parlor firesides, surrounded with almost every luxury that wealth and taste can supply—how can we realize what we have never felt, and actually know nothing about? I speak of those who often experienced absolute hunger, sparingly allayed by tainted meat and mouldy bread—marching and fasting for nights and days together, weary, suffering, fainting, perhaps with bleeding feet, or attacks of small-pox, which was then prevalent, encountering snow, rain, or hail, with ragged, shabby clothing, not being provided, generally, with shoes, nor stockings, nor tents, nor cooking utensils, nor money to buy anything with! But powder and ball they had, and old rusty fowling pieces, without bayonets, fit companions for them to lug along and to figth with, without flinching. These

are some of the miseries to which these brave, old '76 men were exposed to, and many of them endured, to secure our independence. How can such men, such deeds, and such sufferings, ever fail to be appreciated?

With this motley array of an army, of about 5,000 men, collected from all quarters, and ill fitted for duty or discipline, Washington was emboldened to make his celebrated *coup de main* on the Hessians at Trenton. By this stratagem he hoped to relieve New Jersey from their ravages, to prevent Philadelphia from falling into the hands of the British, and to rouse the drooping spirits of the country, which were now at their lowest ebb.

This force was divided into three seperate corps, of which Washington had under his command about 2,400 men; General Ewing and General Cadwalader, with the remainder, were to co-operate, by simultaneous attacks, at Trenton Ferry and at Bristol, whilst Washington was to cross at McKonkey's Ferry, where the boats, under the charge of Colonel Glover, with the Marblehead fishermen, had been got in readiness. These hardy, sea-bred soldiers were engaged, for ten eventful hours, in ferrying over the last reserved hopes and fortunes of our country, through the booming ice crags of that stormy Christmas night. Without the aid of these brave fishermen and the stentorian lungs of General Knox, it is admitted, the army, with its artillery, could not have been got over, nor could the splendid results which followed, which turned the night of despair into a day of rejoicing throughout the country, have been realized.

I shall not attempt to give a description of the attack and capture of the Hessians in this city, every particular of which is as familiar as household words to you all. The conception, execution, and beneficial influence of this successful enterprise have an epic grandeur in our history, worthy the pen of genius, and the pencil of our best painters to portray. Irving and Leutze have done it justice.* Suffice it for me to say, Washington commanded, Greene, Sullivan, St. Clair, Mercer, Sterling, Knox, Dickinson, Stevens, Wilkinson, Stark, Hamilton, Baylor, McPherson, Glover, Forest, Monroe, Captains Washington, Frelinghuyson,† Mott, Moore, and others of our brave officers, and about 2,400 of our hardiest and most reliable troops all did their duty that night, and after taking about 1,000 of the Hessians prisoners, with their colors, cannon, stores, &c., breakfasted in their camp and then returned on the same day, by the same road they came, to the other side of the Delaware.

By this exploit one great object was accomplished. Hope and confidence in our cause were restored. The deliberating and doubting leaped to the free side of the fence. The disaffected and their British allies were amazed; the music of "God save the King" was not so fascinating to some loyal ears as it had been, and this trick of strategy served to astonish General and Lord Howe, to completely "confound their politics," and "frustrate their knavish tricks," and our new-born Republic ventured

* See Appendix.

† It was Captain, afterwards General, Frelinghuyson, who, it is stated, shot General Rahl with a musket.

once more to look out of its cradle with an air of Independence.

The loss of men on this occasion was inconsiderable. Captain Washington, afterwards so distinguished as Colonel in the Southern campaign, and Lieutenant Monroe, afterwards President, were wounded—two men were reported killed, and two frozen, and, among other casualities of the night, we ought not to forget the sufferings of Ewing's and Cadwalader's divisions, who, although deprived of the honor of sharing in the victory, made prodigious exertions to deserve it.

The death of Colonel Rahl, the alarm and flight of Count Dunop, Washington's humane treatment of his prisoners, and exhibiting them in several of the States to convince the doubting and non-committed citizens of his successful capture of these frightful enemies, are all familiarly known. A day or two were allowed the overtasked troops for repose. Refreshments, such as we are accustomed to, were luxuries not dreamed of by them. But Washington did not allow himself even repose for a day. He knew the perils that still surrounded him. He could judge how best to turn the enemy's panic to our own advantage, and to prepare for that vindictive reaction which was sure to stimulate the haughty British lords who, whilst hunting the lion, had presumed to sell his skin. Angered and excited, for he was not imperturbable when great occasions required his being aroused, he wished now to give back some blows like those he had received, whilst his blood was warm. He therefore lost no time in arranging a plan, in connection with Generals Cadwalader, Putnam, Dickinson, and Mifflin, and Colonel Reade, to follow

up the attack of the Hessians, and to drive the British, if possible, out of this State.

That he was not incited to this extra hazardous undertaking, which all military critics have ventured, in spite of its success, to consider a departure from his own usually prudent policy, by a desire to exhibit *decision*, the doubt of which, as a military chief, he must have felt prompted to rebuke, I shall not assert nor deny. But I will certainly maintain, that he always had the good of his country most at heart, and however hazardous this second adventure to measure swords with the enemy on the fields of Trenton was, whatever mixture of feeling and purpose there was in his own breast, there never was a time in the whole management of any threatening disaster, when his genius shewed itself more resplendent, and his military tactics more decidedly efficacious. His early history, his whole life, had exhibited that invincible constitution of soul that rose with the difficulties it had to encounter, and he wanted then to inspire the country with a confidence in him and in their cause, which should know no fear, and, as far as his guarrantee for success could go, his own life, his ample fortune, and unblemished reputation were then cheerfully staked.

On the 29th of December he wrote Congress of his intended project "to pursue the enemy in his retreat, to try to break up more of their quarters, and in every instance to adopt such measures as the exigency of our affairs require and our situation will justify." This is what Wilkinson calls being "infected with a chivalrous spirit."

Many circumstances have conspired to prevent a

full and satisfactory account being given of what should be called the secondary battles at Trenton, in connection with Washington's repulse of the enemy at the bridge and fords of the Assunpink, followed by the night march therefrom, his victory near and at Princeton, and retirement of the army to Morristown, making a combined movement, occupying two days, the 2nd and 3d of January, 1777.

The eclat which attended the first achievement at Trenton, the capture of a thousand of the ferocious Hessians, for a while eclipsed all subsequent events. This was one cause why the second, less brilliant, but equally hazardous and much more important engagement, on the same ground, should be passed over slightingly, both in the private reports of it as well as in the imperfect representations of those who have alluded to it in history.

There is another cause for the meagre reports of the killed and wounded in these several encounters, and of their being ignored in the official returns, or rather of there being no published returns of what took place in these continued skirmishes prior to the attack and capture of the British, near Princeton. Both armies were on flying marches, and their commanders, British as well as American, must have both found themselves in bad positions. Now we know how tenacious military men are of honor and cautious of exposing their mistakes. It is sometimes even as impolitic to boast of a victory as to acknowledge a defeat. Besides, the British army concealed its loss of men by being on the advance all the time it was being attacked by our retreating forces, which continued several hours, and they undoubtedly picked

up their killed and wounded, whether few or many, and left us no account of them. When the attack on our troops posted South of the Assunpink took place, their loss was easier to be reckoned. Now, because a few old people in this neighborhood do not remember any thing about there being any fight on this occasion, whilst others do, and have published the particulars of it, some having been in the battle, some looking on, and one who was engaged in it having published its very interesting details in the same month when it took place, I do not see that we need to be in any doubt about the matter.

With as much brevity as possible, I will now endeavor to shew that there were many severe skirmishes or fights, which continued from before noon until dark, in which a good many of the pursuers must have been killed, and that Lord Cornwallis was not only baffled, but eventually met with a severe repulse in trying to pass the Assunpink on the 2nd, besides being completely outgeneraled on the morning of the 3d of January. My evidence is derived from reliable and authentic reports from those who were participants in, or observers of what was going on at the time, and I shall certainly endeavor to state them fairly, leaving others to form their own opinions.

Three days after the first victory at Trenton, Washington set out with the troops under his command to cross the Delaware in boats, but it was two days before they all could be got over. The weather was soft and the ice drifting, and the roads almost impassable with mire and snow. On their arrival they took up the quarters which the Hessians had occu-

pied the week before. Here they were joined by about 3,000 of the new levies under Generals Cadwalader and Mifflin, and a part of the Massachusetts and Rhode Island brigade, commanded by the gallant Colonel Hitchcock, who died of fatigue and suffering, the week after, at Morristown. This junction of the old and new troops took place on Tuesday night, the last day of the year, and also the last day of service of nearly all the old soldiers whom Washington had to depend on.

The published account, in my possession, of Joseph Howland, a veteran then in service, but who closed his career, honorable all the way through, from his sixteenth year, the earliest period he was allowed to enter the lists to serve his country, until he died, last year, President of the Historical Society of Rhode Island, aged ninety-seven years—is one of the authorities on whom I most rely. He paints this night's occurrence with touching and truthful simplicity.

"We were assembled," he says, "at a place called Crosswicks, on the 31st day of December, 1776; the term of service of all the Continental troops except ours, (Lippet's regiment,) expired on that evening—our regiment was held for 18 days longer. This was the time which tried both body and soul—we were standing on frozen ground which was covered with snow. The hope of the Commander-in-chief was sustained by the character of those half frozen, half starved men, that he could persuade them to volunteer for another month. He made the attempt, and it was successful. He directed or requested General Mifflin to address our brigade—he

did it well. The request of the General was assented to by our unanimously poising our firelocks as a signal. In two hours after this vote, we were on our march for Trenton. From the badness of the roads, the darkness of the night, accidents to the artillery carriages, &c., we consumed the whole night in the march. When we had kindled a fire and were collecting from our knapsacks or pockets a stray remnant of bread or tainted pork, and thus taking our little share of rest or comfort, the drums beat and we were immediately paraded."

This authentic description is graphic enough to be believed and felt. Who, in our day, would eat tainted pork or mouldy bread?

On the same day the army was assembled at Trenton, General Washington had sent out Colonel Read, who was born here, to reconnoitre towards Princeton. He had six of the Pennsylvania troop with him, who had never been in service. After scouring the country, they gallantly surprised and brought back with them twelve of the enemy's picket guards, from whom valuable information was obtained, which induced the General to prepare immediately for the conflict on the 2nd of January. The enemy's superiority, in numbers and condition, left no doubt of their having great advantage, and as Washington could not, or would not, retreat, thereby to disappoint the new-born hopes of Congress and the country, and expose Philadelphia to be captured, he resolved to defend his position to the utmost, or, in the language of a cotemporary officer, "to await the enemy's advance and avail himself of circumstances—that is, to fight and die

if he could not conquer, or extricate himself with honor."

Early on the morning of the 2nd of January, 1777, General Cornwallis, with Grant's division, left Princeton. Their outposts extended to the eight mile run. The whole army amounted to about 8,000 troops, part of which, under General Leslie, were to be posted on the road, and another part was left to follow next morning from Princeton. Probably about 5,000 were to move forward to break up General Washington's quarters at Trenton. The usual prestige of the British, with their proud red coats and glittering arms, and St. George's banner heralding their devoted attachment to loyalty and booty, had lately received such a check from the "ragamuffin rebels," that redoubled vengeance now lighted up their maddened countenances, as they cursed the cowardly Hessians, and were ready to pounce on their presumptuous assailants. Cornwallis was determined to make an end of such troublesome traitors, who would neither stay beaten, nor submit to royal pardon, nor consent to tempting bribes. Annihilation was the only remedy, and with guns and drums, and all the zeal of fiery Mars, fiercely he braved that winter morning's dangers, and marched on to Trenton, and then—to anticipate a little in the bulletin style—he marched back again!

Washington, aware of his enemy's real superiority in numbers, and condition of his troops, made prompt and determined exertions to check his advance, and to provide as strong a position as possible for his own army. The arrangements for the day were as follows:

Generals Mifflin and Cadwalader were ordered to bring up their Pennsylvania recruits, to assist the combined forces of the old regiments ; connected with these were some of Colonel Hitchcock's brigade, who had been stationed at Bristol. The whole American force consisted of about 5,000 men, of whom two-thirds were new levies, and old, war-worn invalids.

The main body of the army was posted on the South side of the Assunpink—yon little river—the tributary, but on this occasion the rival of the proud Delaware in story. Its sloping bank above the bridge, eastward, was soon thrown up into parapets, so that the infantry could fire diagonally in line over each other's heads. This spot has since been converted by the hand of taste, and in remembrance of Washington's defence of it, into a beautiful terrace and pleasure ground, the residence of our friend, Mr. Quintin. Near the bridge below, the only one then in Trenton, over which a part of the Hessian dragoons escaped the week before, to Bordentown, and the same where Washington was crowned with flowers by the ladies of Trenton, in 1789—where stood, in 1777, the old Stacy Mill,—there now stands the large steam and water-power factory for making paper—not amenable to any stamp act regulation. Below this, on the high ground on the opposite side of the road, to the South-west, Knox's battery was posted, in a capital position for firing up Greene street, to check the enemy's advance, as well as to defend the fords on either side of the bridge. Still lower down the stream there was a field on its margin, extending towards the flats of the Delaware. On this ground Washington directed Colonel Hitch-

cock's New England regiment to take their stand and guard the fords where they could easily have been crossed, and would probably have been, but for their determined show of resistance. A small space of the artillery ground on that occasion, is still unoccupied near the street, on the top of the hill next the bridge. All the residue, with the field below, is now covered with thriving factories, foundries, flour mills, &c.

Washington having thus taken his position, dispatched a strong division under General Fermoy, with a battery of six guns, under charge of the brave Capt. Forest, Colonel Hand's riflemen, Colonel Scott's Virginia regiment, and the German battalion of Houssiger, to Five mile run, on the Princeton road, where they were posted on the night preceding the battle, with pickets extending to what is now Lawrenceville. It was evidently Washington's intention to check the advance of Cornwallis, to thin his ranks, and by harassing him during his march, to weaken his confidence, and to decoy him adroitly in pursuit of a retreating but galling adversary, with as much procrastination as practicable, so that the day might be consumed before he could reach our fortified position on the Assunpink, toward which Washington wished his attention exclusively invited in order not to have his rear so exposed as to place our army in a *cul de sac*. To prevent this, he ordered General St. Clair's brigade to guard the fording places of that river *above the town* with two guns, which actually prevented the enemy's flanking parties from crossing there. If these stray hawks, who got upon that sight, had not been called off to pursue the game

ahead, it might have been a sorry day with our army, as good a quarry as our General was. He must infallibly have been caught, if by his sagacity he had not used the most admirable skill and precaution in the whole arrangement of this almost ignored part of the day's achievements, eclipsed, as they scarcely were, by those of the succeeding night.

As these precautionary orders were given early, with the full foresight of what might be the ultimate fortunes of the day, could not Washington have had then revolving in his mind that famous night retreat to Princeton, which was afterwards adopted in a council of war, and which, General Wilkinson says, was first proposed by General St. Clair ?

I do not presume to say that this was not so, for that brave old comrade of Washington in former wars, however unfortunate afterwards, was ever trusted and beloved by him, and on this occasion was particularly confided in as he was well acquainted with the ground in this neighborhood. However, in the throes of that agonizing night, whoever may have suggested the Cæsarean operation of delivering the army out of its perilous situation, and eventually causing a separation fatal to the hopes of the mother country, let it be remembered that *many* may be entitled to a share of distinction, whose particular merits may never have been justly recorded in history, but it would be invidious to deny any who assisted in it, especially the barefooted soldiers, whatever share of glory they were richly entitled to.

The first shot that was exchanged between the two outposts of the British and Americans on the morning of the 2nd, killed a Hessian Yager, pursu-

ing a Mr. Hunt towards Lawrenceville, within the American picket. Apprized by this of the enemy's approach, our troops at Five mile run were called to arms and retired slowly until orders were received from Washington to dispute every inch of ground without too great risk of the guns. Colonel Hand with his riflemen, and Major Miller with the guards, and Forest with his six pieces of artillery, at once faced about and made a stand that checked the enemy's advance, and this they continued to do, with much loss to the British as they advanced, until they reached Shabbakong, a little rivulet about two miles from Trenton, where there was a thick wood extending on one side of the road nearly a mile in depth. Here Hand posted his riflemen, and with Major Miller's guards on the left, waited under cover of the trees until the British came within point blank shot, and then, opening a heavy fire, drove them back with great loss and confusion.

As they retreated their flank and advanced guards were pursued by our riflemen.

The boldness of this maneuvre completely checked the whole British forces, and by threatening them with a general attack, caused Cornwallis to form them in order of battle, and bringing up his artillery, he scoured the wood for a half an hour to dislodge our riflemen. Before this whole arrangement could be got through with, full two hours were lost to him and gave our fatigued soldiers time to refresh themselves and prepare for another such skirmish, or more properly repulse. The British finally got by the wood and leaving the Shabbakong in their rear, wheeled to the high ground on the right.

On the North side of Trenton, about a mile from where the town then was, there is a ravine leading to the Assunpink. On the South-west side of the hollow the advance of the Americans was posted in strong force, having Forest's battery with about six hundred men to defend their position. Here they made their last stand. Here Washington, with Greene and Knox, were on the ground about three o'clock, and after thanking the troops, especially the artillery and riflemen, for their bravery, and encouraging them to make as bold a resistance as they could on that ground, the General returned to martial his troops for the defence on the Assunpink. He was then expecting, undoubtedly, that *there* would be *the* battle on which depended the fortunes of his country, and his own reputation, with the probable sacrifice of his life, and the total destruction or capture of his devoted officers and soldiers! He was mounted on his proud white charger, as undaunted as himself, and, if Trumbull's picture of the scene is correct, they both seemed to breath defiance and to anticipate victory; for, after dismounting and taking his stand on the West side of the bridge, which old Mr. Howland states, was precisely his position, as the sun was about setting, the artist paints him with his head uncovered, and standing as if waiting the crisis

"Like Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved."

The last skirmish with the British in the outskirts of the town was now waxing warm. One of the officers engaged in it states, that they brought up a battery to attack ours, and when the action had continued twenty or twenty-five minutes, they partially displayed column, and advanced in line. The firing

of musketry was soon mingled with that of artillery, but the enemy's forces being three times more numerous than ours, he continued his advance until he forced us to retire by the bridge across the Assunpink.

The main conflict of the day has now to be described. I shall avail myself of four several accounts of it, and you will be able to judge whether their concurrent testimony makes it out worthy the name of a battle. At all events, it was a repulse, and not a bloodless one, to our enemies, nor of small advantage to the Americans, who kept the field yonder as long as they thought proper to hold it. This is certainly written in the king's chronicles, and *that field, is it not still with us?*

General Wilkinson, who was an eye witness of this "day's disaster" to Cornwallis, which was so visible on the morrow "in his mourning face" states, that he had a fair flank view of this little combat near the bridge, from the opposite side of the Assunpink, and recollected perfectly that the sun had set and the evening was so far advanced that he could distinguish the flames from the muzzles of our muskets.

A writer in the Connecticut Journal, who was an officer in the battle, states on the 22d of the same month in which it was fought, that "on Thursday the enemy marched down in a body of 4 to 5,000 men to attack our people at Trenton. Not long before sunset they marched into the town and after reconnoitering our situation, drew up in a solid column in order to force the bridge, which they attempted to do with great vigor, at *three* several times, and were as often broken by our artillery

and obliged to retreat, and to give over the attempt *after suffering great loss, supposed to be at least* 150 *killed.*"

An eye witness published an account in the Princeton Whig, November 4th, 1842, from which I select the following :

"Washington's army was drawn up on the east side of the Assunpink, with its left on the Delaware river, and its right extending a considerable way up the mill pond along the face of the hill, where the Factories now stand. The troops were placed one above the other. so that they appeared to cover the whole slope from bottom to top, which brought a great many muskets within shot of the bridge. Within 70 or 80 yards of the bridge and directly in front of, and in the road, as many pieces of artillery as could be managed were stationed. * * * The British did not delay the attack. They were formed in two columns, the one marching down Greene street to carry the bridge, and the other down Main (now Warren) street, to ford the creek, near where the lower bridge now stands. From the nature of the ground, and being on the left, this attack (simultaneously with the one on the bridge) I was not able to see. It was repelled, and eye witnesses say the creek was nearly filled with their dead. The other column moved slowly down the street, with their choicest troops in front. When within about sixty yards of the bridge they raised a shout and rushed to the charge. It was then that our men poured upon them with musketry and artillery, a shower of bullets, under which however, they continued to advance, though their speed was diminished, and as the column reached

the bridge, it moved slower and slower until the head of it was gradually pressed nearly over, when our fire became so distructive that they broke their ranks and fled. It was then that our army raised a shout, and such a shout I have never since heard; by what signal or word of command, I know not. The line was more than a mile in length and from the nature of the ground the extremes were not in sight of each other, yet they shouted as one man. The British column halted instantly; the officers restored the ranks and again they rushed to the bridge, and again was the shower of bullets poured upon them with redoubled fury. This time the column broke before it reached the centre of the bridge, and their retreat was again followed by the same hearty shout from our line. They returned a third time to the charge, but it was in vain. We shouted after them again, but they had enough of it. It is strange that no account of the loss of the English was ever published, but from what I saw it must have been great."

Mr. Howland says that General Washington had ordered Hitchcock's brigade "to cross the bridge, and march through the main town street to cover the retreat of the artillery and picket into, and through the north end of the town. This was towards the close of the day. We met them and opened our ranks to let them pass through; we then closed in a compact and rather solid column, as the street through which we had to retreat was narrow, and the British pressed closely on our rear. Part of the enemy pressed into a street between the main street and the Delaware (now Warren street) and fired into

our right flank at every space between the houses. When, what was now our front, arrived near the bridge, which we were to pass, and where the lower, or Water street (now Front) formed a junction with Main (now Greene street,) the British made a quick march in an oblique direction to cut us off from the bridge. In this they did not succeed, as we had a shorter distance in a direct line to the bridge than they had, and our artillery, which was posted on the south side of the brook, between the bridge and the Delaware, played into the front and flank of their column, which induced them to fall back. The bridge was narrow and our platoons in passing it were crowded into a dense and solid mass in the rear, of which the enemy were making their best efforts. * * As soon as our brigade had passed, the cannon, which had been drawn aside to leave us a passage, were again placed at the end of the bridge and discharged into the front of the enemy's column which was advancing towards it ; at the same time, several pieces which were placed at the right and left of the bridge, *with musketry at the intervals*, took them partly in flank. They did not succeed in their attempt to cross the bridge, and although the creek was fordable between the bridge and the Delaware, they declined attempting a passage there in the face of those who presented a more serious obstruction, than the water, to wit: Colonel Hitchcock's Massachusetts and Rhode Island brigade. Here ended the combats of that memorable day."

From the foregoing accounts it seems to me an unquestionable fact that there was severe fighting, and that the lists of killed and wounded must have

been large, although the official reports of the action, both English and American, are very curt and unsatisfactory in their allusions to it. That it was costly to the British and ended ingloriously for their commander, as well as exceedingly critical in its consequences to the Americans, and invested Washington's military fame with a note of interrogation as well as of admiration, cannot be doubted. Napoleon once remarked of General Blucher, that he never vanquished him over night that he did not always return to the fight the next morning. Washington in this instance was not vanquished, although some say he ought to have been ; but he was certainly a victor, and by his admirable strategical arrangements to escape out of his perplexing difficulty, both before and after Cornwallis gave up the contest at the bridge, he deserves imperishable renown. The guarding of the fords above the town, as already alluded to, and the costly repulses the British met with as they advanced and were lured towards that fatal bridge-fight, just late enough to cause Cornwallis to forego present advantage, and to create a blind confidence in an easy triumph on the morrow, deserve particular consideration, and whether few or many fell in accomplishing the repulses of that day's work, cannot now be a matter of little moment. Blank cartridges certainly would not have done it ; and if cannon and musket balls could speak, enough of them have been picked up to tell the story of a fight at the bridge, beside what had been done on the Shabbakong, and along the road. I have not a doubt that our enemies, although they concealed their losses during this days various engagements, suffered more

than they did in both the battles of Trenton and Princeton. We may reasonably estimate their loss by killed and wounded at 500 at least, besides incidentally producing, in connexion with other losses to their cause about this time, which were wholly incalculable, the release of thousands of the oppressed citizens of this State, who were soon afterwards converted into its unfaltering defenders.

When Cornwallis found himself so roughly handled and repulsed on attempting to cross the Assunpink, a fatal delusion seemed to possess his mind. He told his officers "he had the enemy safe enough and could dispose of them next morning." For these reasons he proposed that the troops should make fires, refresh themselves and take repose. General Grant and other officers, and the troops, without doubt, coincided in this conclusion, and thus the British army indulged in that repose which "knew not waking" until the thunder of the cannon at Princeton aroused them from their morning's slumber, and the frightened Cornwallis, having played the lord with the loyal ladies of Trenton, and exchanged salutations with the tories at the splendid new mansion on the south west corner of Greene and State streets, (where now stands the iron pillared store of independent Americans, who dare to sell hob-hails contrary to the act of Parliament at that time) found himself summoned by the morning drum-beat to give up his dream of conquest, and to admit for once that Washington, whom Sir William Erskine styled the night before, "an old fox," had disdained to be caught, even by a lordly sportsman.

Whilst sleep and refreshing repose were thus wear-

ing away the hours of a winter's night with our enemies at Trenton, a very different state of things—a most ominous and anxious apprehension of to-morrow's events—filled the minds of every weary officer and soldier on the other side of the Assunpink. There watched they with patience, still ready to do and dare everything for their country, which their beloved commander should require of them. The star-studded canopy of heaven was the only tent they had that night ; the miry ground mixed with snow, was the only place afforded them for repose, until a rude cold wind stiffened it into seats which they could use until their orders for the night should be received. But the protecting hand of Providence was still stretched out over them, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that some minds among them may have looked up to the firmament over their heads and thanked God for giving this country no cheap independence, and for making them willing to become martyrs to achieve it.

The camp fires were soon lighted, and all was conjecture what was to be done on the morrow. As hour after hour passed away, there was naturally some impatience, but no insubordination. A council of war was called at St. Clair's head quarters, in a small house still standing on the south side of the road, occupied by Miss Douglass, near the German Church. Washington's quarters were rendered untenable by the enemy's attack. He was surrounded by difficulties, and never did he so much before require and receive the advice and confidence of his officers. The danger seemed to hang over and threaten to crush them all. He, however, main-

tained his own firm hold of calm confidence in God, and the justice of his cause, and, like that lofty tower, the seeming wonder of Pisa, which ever appears about to fall, still ever firmly stands, he inspired all hearts with confidence.

Of several plans proposed at that meeting, the boldest one was unanimously adopted, to wit: by a retrograde movement to attack the over-confident enemy in his rear, to beat up his quarters at Princeton, and, if possible, capture his stores at New Brunswick. Orders were immediately given to put the troops under march with the least noise and delay possible, and to send off what guns, baggage, and stores were not wanted, to Bordentown.

The enemy's watch-fires were kindled only about 150 yards from the American camp. Washington directed his sentinels to take the fences and keep up brisk fires opposite to them until morning, and then to retreat to Princeton. Men were also engaged to throw up intrenchments as near the British pickets as possible and to make evident preparations for the morrow. All was now going on stilly and actively as possible, and fortunately about midnight there was, what Washington called, a Providential change in the weather. The roads became hard enough to support the artillery, and for the troops to march on frozen ground. Washington and his officers went the rounds among them and encouraged them to be firm and quiet.

Then was presented a scene on the banks of our peaceful little Assunpink, which is well realized by Shakespeare's description of Henry the 5th, whose army, by the way was about the same size and in

as miserable a condition at Agincourt before his victory, as Washington's was here.

"From camp to camp through the foul womb of night,
The hum of either army stilly sounds,
That the fixed sentinels almost receive
The secret whispers of each others watch.
Fire answers fire—

O! now who will behold
The noble captain of this ruin'd band,
Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,
Let him cry, praise and glory on his head."

I need not give a detailed account of what our brave countrymen suffered and achieved on their march to and after they arrived at Princeton. These events have been faithfully and graphically related by others. Of Washington's desperate exposure of himself and almost miraculous escape between the vollies of Mawhood's troops and our own in the recovery of the field, near Princeton, of the loss of the lamented Mercer and many of our bravest officers in that dear-bought victory, of the capture of about 400 of the British, with a large quantity of their stores and baggage, of the halting of our wearied soldiers at Kingston, without going to Brunswick, of their retirement to Pluckemin, and eventually to Morristown, where they went into winter quarters, and amongst many other sufferings and privations underwent a general inoculation for the small-pox—of these and various interesting matters. I might go on to relate, but the truthful Howland will do it better.* With part of his story and with a female's most beautiful description of Washington's

*See Appendix.

retreat to, rally and victory at Princeton, Miss C. F. Orne, I will here finish my grateful task, hoping that every American will appreciate as I do and try to perpetuate the motto

"*Gloria majorum, posteris lumen.*"

APPENDIX.

"After the conflicts of the day at Trenton were over," Mr. Howland says "night closed upon us and the weather which had been mild and pleasant through the day became intensely cold. On one hour, yes, on forty minutes, commencing at the moment when the British troops first saw the bridge and creek before them, depended the all important, the all absorbing question whether we should be independent States, or conquered rebels! Had the army of Cornwallis within that space crossed the bridge or forded the creek, unless a miracle intervened, there would have been an end of the American army. If any fervent mind should doubt this it must be from his not knowing the state of our few half starved, half frozen, feeble, worn out men, with old fowling pieces for muskets and half of them without bayonets, and the States so disheartened, discouraged or poor that they sent no reinforcements, no recruits to supply the places of this handful of men who but the day before had volunteered to remain with their venerated and beloved commander for thirty days more."

"The march that night from Trenton to Princeton is well known. It was not by the direct road—a considerable part of it was by a new passage, which appeared to have been cut through the woods, as the stubs were left from two to five inches high. We moved slow on account of the artillery frequently coming to a halt or stand still, and when ordered forward again, one, two or three men in each platoon would stand with their arms supported, fast asleep. A platoon next in the rear advancing on them, they, in walking or attempting to move would strike a stub and fall."

"Besides the prisoners taken at Princeton, there were a number of wagons loaded with the army baggage. I suppose it was about noon when we left Princeton with the prize goods and prisoners—we marched quick, as the advance guard of the British army whom we had left the night before at Trenton, were said to be close in our rear, following us as they supposed to Brunswick, the head-quarters of General Howe, but in three or four miles we turned a square corner

and proceeded North toward Somerset court house, in which the prisoners were shut up. It will be remembered this was the third night's march, and under arms or marching all day. There were barely houses enough for the quarters of the generals and their attendants. The troops took up their abode for the rest of the night on the frozen ground. All the fences and every thing that would burn was piled in different heaps and burnt, and he was the most fortunate who could get nigh enough to smell the fire or smoke. The next day we continued our march towards Morristown."

Appendix, (page 28.)

Washington Irving says: "Colonel Rahl had received a warning from General Grant, at Princeton, of the intended attack, and of the very time it was to be made, but stating that it was to be by a detachment under Lord Stirling. Rahl was accordingly on the alert."

"It so happened that about dusk of the very morning when Washington must have been preparing to cross the Delaware, there were alarm guns and firing at Trenton outpost. The whole garrison was instantly drawn out under arms, and Colonel Rahl hastened to the outpost. It was found in confusion and six men wounded. A body of men had emerged from the woods, fired upon the picket, and immediately retired. Colonel Rahl, with two companies and a field piece, marched through the woods and made the rounds of the outposts, but seeing and hearing nothing, and finding all quiet, returned. Supposing this to be the attack against which he had been warned, and that it was "a mere flash in the pan," he relapsed into his feeling of security, and, as the night was cold and stormy, permitted the troops to retire to their quarters and lay aside their arms. Thus the garrison and its unwary commander slept in fancied security at the very time that Washington and his troops were crossing the Delaware. How perilous would have been their situation, had their enemy been more vigilant!"

Mr. Irving further says in a note:

"Who it was that made this attack upon the outpost is not clearly ascertained. The Hessian Lieutenant who commanded at the picket, says, it was a patrol sent out by Washington, under command of a Captain to reconnoitre, with strict orders not to engage, but, if discovered, to retire instantly, as silently as possible. Colonel

Read in a memorandum says, it was an advance party returning from the Jerseys to Pennsylvania."

In regard to this most interesting statement I have to observe, I have found it in no history, besides that of Mr. Irving, who says he derived it from the German authority he quotes, and Gordon's published a few years after the war, which states the occurrence as follows :

In a letter dated April 16th, 1777, giving an account of this attack on the Hessians, he goes on to say:

"Colonel Rall has received information of an intended attack, and that the 25th, at night, is thought to be the time fixed upon. His men are paraded and his picket is looking out for it. Captain Washington, commanding a scouting party of about fifty soldiers, has been in the Jerseys about three days without effecting any exploit. He therefore concludes upon marching towards Trenton ; advances and attacks the picket. He exchanges a few shot and then retreats. As he is making for the Delaware on his return to Pennsylvania, he meets with General Washington's troops (December 26th,) conjecturing their design, he is distressed with an apprehension that by the attack he has alarmed the enemy and put them under their guard. The enemy on the other hand, conclude from it, after a while, that it is all the attack which is intended, and so retire to their quarters and become secure. Many got drunk. What relates to the attack," Mr. Gordon says in a note, "was confirmed to me August 11th, 1785, in New York, by the Rev. Mr. Amdelen, who had the story from the Hessian officer commanding the picket."

In corroboration of this attack, there is a tradition in the Potts' family, where Colonel Rahl had his head-quarters, in Trenton, and where he died, that on the evening of Christmas day, whilst he was playing the game of fox and geese (he affecting the fox, probably,) and old Mr. Potts being his Quaker adversary, there was a sudden report of fire-arms which alarmed the Colonel, and he moved rather confusedly for a short period and then got up and went out, and he was not known to be at home that night afterwards, nor until he was brought there wounded.

Now it is evident that it was not a party under Captain Washington, for he at the very time was with the army crossing the Delaware, and in the morning following commanded the advance guard which captured the Hessian artillery.

Nor was it Colonel Read, for he was at Bristol with Cadwalader trying to get through the ice that evening. But the following extract from the "eye witness" of what took place on the 2d of January, whose account appeared in the Princeton Whig, as quoted on page 42, will explain who were the "patrol" that did so much service to our General and his army on that evening. He says:

"When the army under Washington, in the year '76, retreated over the Delaware, I was with them. At that time there remained in Jersey only a small company of riflemen, hiding themselves between New Brunswick and Princeton."

"In the morning of the day on which the battle of the Assunpink was fought, I, with several others, was detached under the command of Capt. Longstreet, with orders to collect as many men as we could in the country between Princeton, Cranbury, and Rhode Hall, and then unite ourselves *with the company of riflemen who had remained in that neighborhood.*"

All honor to their devoted patriotism and heroic courage! They were the Spartans, perhaps, who saved the State, and formed an exception to the majority, who then, as stated, yielded to those motives which afterwards cost them so dear.

WASHINGTON AT PRINCETON.

BY C. F. ORNE.

The Assunpink was choked with dead between us and the foe;
We had mowed their ranks before our guns, as ripe grain is laid low;
But we were few, and worn and spent—many and strong were they,
And they waited but the morning down to fall upon their prey.
We left our camp-fires burning that their ruddy gleaming light
Might hide from Lord Cornwallis our hurried march by night.
While fiery Erskine fretted at his leader's fond delay,
All silently and swiftly we were marching on our way.
For the British troops at Princeton our little force was bound;
We tracked with bare and bleeding feet the rough and frozen ground;
All night we hastened onward, and we spoke no word of plaint,
Though we were chilled with bitter cold, with toil and fasting faint;
We hailed with joy the sunlight, as o'er the hills it streamed,
And through the sharp and frosty air on the near homesteads beamed.
We were weary, we were hungry; before us lay good cheer,
And right gladly to the hearth-fires our eager steps drew near.
But sudden, on our startled sight, long lines of bayonets flash;
The road's a-glow with scarlet coats! The British on us dash!
The smoke-wreaths from our volleys meet; then hand to hand the fight;
Proud gallant Mercer falls; our lines are wavering in flight!
"Press on!" cries Mawhood, "by St. George! the rebel cowards fly,
We'll sweep their ranks before our charge, as storm-winds sweep the sky."

They burst with bold and sudden spring as a lion on the prey,
Our ranks of worn and weary men to that fierce rush gave way.
Black was that bitter moment, and well nigh all was lost,
But forth there sprang a god-like form between us and the host.
The martyr-fires of freedom in his flaming glances burned,
As his awful countenance sublime upon the foe he turned;
And reining up his gallant steed, alone amid the fight,
Like an angel of the Lord he stood to our astonished sight!
And instantly our wavering bands wheeled into line again,
And suddenly from either side the death-shots fell like rain.
All hearts stood still; and horror-struck was each averted eye,
For who could brook that moment's look? or who could see *him* die?
But when the smoke-clouds lifted, and still we saw him there,
Oh, what a mighty shout of joy filled all the startled air!
And tears fell like the summer showers from our bravest and our best,
As dashing up with fiery pace around him close they prest.
A moment's hand-grasp to his Aid, that told the tale of hours,
"Away! bring up the troops," he cried, "the day is wholly ours."

"Now praised be God!" from grateful lips the fervent prayer uprose,
And then, as with an eagle's swoop, we burst upon our foes.

And "Long live Washington," we cried, in answer to his shout,
As still he spurred his charger on amid the flying rout.
They broke their ranks before our charge; amain they wildly fled;
Stiff on the slopes, at Princeton, they left their hapless dead.
No more a band of weary men we followed in his track;
And bore with stern resistless force the British Lion back;
Our toilsome march, our sleepless nights, cold, hunger—what were they?
We broke the yoke of foreign power on that eventful day.
The great heart of our leader went on before us then,
And led us forth to wield the strength of more than mortal men,
The pulses of that noble heart a nation's life concealed.
But fate refused the sacrifice whose offer won the field.

From Graham's Magazine, for February, 1856.